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SPECIAL ANALYSES

RHODESIA: The Outlook for Mugabe's Government

Victorious Zimbabwe African National Union leader Robert Mugabe has begun consolidating his grip on power by adopting a conciliatory stance toward old foes and those with the power to undermine him--the Rhodesian security forces, South Africa, Joshua Nkomo, and the whites. He has asked the British to stay long enough to ensure a smooth transition to independence. We expect Mugabe to continue moving cautiously--a course of action that gives him the best chance of success. [REDACTED]

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Mugabe first must select a cabinet. Although his party's majority enables him to govern alone, Mugabe has asked Nkomo's Zimbabwe African People's Union to join a coalition and has informed Soames of his intention to include at least two white ministers, presumably from former Prime Minister Ian Smith's party. Nkomo reportedly had agreed to accept the largely ceremonial role of President. [REDACTED]

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The most difficult problem confronting the new government will be integration into one army of the various armed groups--the white-led security forces, including auxiliaries who favored defeated ex-Prime Minister Muzorewa; Nkomo's forces; and the ZANU guerrillas. Stability could hinge on this effort. Mugabe has in the past implied that the ZANU guerrillas would provide the core of the new army, but he probably recognizes the political necessity of including the other forces. [REDACTED]

Mugabe reportedly has asked Rhodesian security forces commander General Walls to be in charge of the integration effort. The new Zimbabwe cannot afford a large army, and many soldiers and guerrillas will have to be returned to civilian life--a time-consuming and difficult program. [REDACTED]

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A Cautious Approach

Because of the potential for instability, we expect Mugabe to move cautiously in implementing ZANU's version of African socialism. He has said he has no plans for nationalizing the country's industry or mines. State participation probably will increase, however, in wholly owned foreign mining operations; the government already runs the major utilities. []

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Mugabe wants to avoid a white exodus because he realizes the white residents' skills will continue to be useful in running the economy and the civil service. He also has promised not to interfere with the large export-oriented estates of the country's roughly 5,000 white commercial farmers as long as they are efficiently run. []

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Mugabe is committed, however, to redistributing to black farmers the vast holdings of absentee landlords like Lord Salisbury and unused or underused white-owned land. The owners presumably will be compensated by funds provided at least in part by foreign donors, including the UK and US. []

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A Nonaligned Foreign Policy

The new government can be expected to pursue a nonaligned foreign policy not unlike that of Mozambique or Tanzania. Zimbabwe probably will look first to the West, particularly the UK and US, for economic aid. It is likely to seek Western military assistance and in time probably will also seek it from China, the USSR, and Eastern Europe. []

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Mugabe has never been close to the Soviets. He probably will be cautious about relations with the Soviets and their allies for fear of offending the Chinese and of upsetting Zimbabwean whites and South Africa. []

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The Soviets had favored Nkomo and now find themselves playing catch-up politics. They are now seeking to make the best of the election results and will try to use past ties with Nkomo to gain leverage in the new government. []

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South Africa's Role

Zimbabwe's key foreign policy problem will be its relationship with South Africa. With the economies of southern Africa tied by a road and rail net, Zimbabwe will need an accommodation of some sort with Pretoria. Mugabe has publicly sketched the broad terms of an accommodation--similar to the one between Mozambique and South Africa--centered on a mutual noninterference pledge. [REDACTED]

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The Longer Term

Mugabe will inevitably come under pressure from within his own party to make more rapid and radical changes. Political firebrands in ZANU probably would prefer a more radical social program and perhaps a less conciliatory approach toward the whites. They are not in a position to challenge Mugabe's leadership, however--a leadership made more secure than ever by ZANU's spectacular electoral victory. [REDACTED]

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Barring a highly unsettling development such as Mugabe's assassination, Mugabe's present conciliatory policies could well give him time to consolidate his position and to begin a gradual transition to socialism. If he fails to keep Nkomo and General Walls on board, however, his chances for success will diminish. [REDACTED]

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